

An Essay on
Vaccinella or Cow-pox.

Respectfully submitted to the Faculty of the

Homœopathic Medical College
of
Pennsylvania

On the 28th day of January. Eighteen hundred & fifty-four

By Dr. J. Bryant

of Brooklyn
N. Y.

Vaccinella or Cow-pox.

One of the most important discoveries of modern times, is the prophylactic virtue of Cow-pox, in extinguishing in the human organism, its susceptibility to the contagion of that loathsome, malignant, and pestilential disease—Small-pox.

This discovery was first made in Germany in the year 1769; when it was observed that those persons who had contracted the vaccine disease from the udder of cows, were preserved from various infection. But no practical use was made of the observation, until several years afterwards, when Dr. Edward Jenner first introduced it into the human system by inoculation.

The announcement of this discovery by Dr. Jenner, gave rise to a violent controversy with respect to its merits; and Jenner was subjected to much

abuse and persecution, especially from the medical profession. And it was not until the King, the Dukes of York and Clarence, Lords Egremont, Aylesbury, Ossory, and others of the nobility of England gave Jenner the support of their influence, that he was enabled to introduce the discovery into general practice. Yet with eventually triumphed, the opposition gave way, abuse and persecution were succeeded by plaudits and honours; Oxford presented Jenner with a diploma, the Royal Society admitted him to membership, and Parliament gave a tangible expression of their appreciation of the discovery, by voting him £20,000 sterling. The name of Jenner is immortal.

Although at the present day vaccination is practiced in almost every part of the habitable globe; and almost universally admitted to be prophylactic against Small-pox; yet at the

same time there exists among medical men a diversity of opinion with respect to its merits, and the extent of its influence as a prophylactic agent. With reference to this question we beg leave to offer the following brief remarks: not that we would arrogantly decide where doctors disagree, yet as "the agitation of thought is the beginning of truth," so the conflict of opinions lead to the investigation and confirmation of truth.

There exists in the human organism, a natural susceptibility to certain contagious diseases which possess the power of extinguishing the receptivity of the system to a future infection. Among the most prominent of these, is Variola or Small-pox. And it is in accordance with the great natural law of "Similia similibus curantur", - that Vaccinella or Cow-pox, a disease similar or analogous to Small-pox - possesses the power of annihilating the

susceptibility of the system to the contagion of that disease.

The great stumbling block with many in the medical profession, as well as with the general public, is the well known fact, that many persons who have been vaccinated, receive variolous infection, and have what is called Varioloid. And they ask, how is this? If Cow-pox is really prophylactic against Small-pox, how happens it that so many of those who have been vaccinated, apparently under the most favorable circumstances, receive the infection, and have Varioloid: and what is the difference between Varioloid and Small-pox?

To these questions various answers have been given. Some say that Cow-pox is only partially protective against Small-pox; and that persons who have been vaccinated may take Small-

-prop; yet hold that they are not as liable to receive the infection, and if they do, they will have the disease in a milder form.

Others entertain the opinion, that after the lapse of seven, fourteen, or twenty-one years, "Cow-prop runs out," or loses its prophylactic influence; and, that consequently the receptivity of the system to variolous infection becomes re-established, and that re-vaccination is necessary in order to renew the protection.

Others maintain the position that Cow-prop is prophylactic against *Varicella*, yet does not afford protection against *Varioloid*, which they hold to be a disease of another genus.

Let us for a moment examine the opinions above expressed.

If Cow-prop is only partially protective against Small-prop how are we to

account for the fact, that a large proportion of those vaccinated, escape the contagion of Variola, although frequently exposed to its influence?—

If Cow-pox "runs out" or loses its prophylactic influence, how is it that so many who have been vaccinated in infancy, and who, without being re-vaccinated, have twenty, thirty, or even forty years afterwards, frequently exposed themselves to the contagion of Small-pox, and yet have escaped with impunity? And again, have we any more evidence, or reason to suppose that Cow-pox runs out or loses its prophylactic influence, than that the protection afforded by Small-pox is transitory?—

We are aware that instances have occurred where individuals have had Small-pox twice, or even three times, and the same has been observed of Measles, and Hooping-cough, but such cases are exceptions

to the general rule. The recurrence of the disease in the same individual is an anomaly, owing to a constitutional peculiarity, or predisposition to the disease).

To those who hold that Varioloid is a disease of another genus, and not of common origin with Small-pox, we propose the following questions.

How happens it that those persons who never have been vaccinated or receiving the infection of Varioloid, have genuine Variola? And again, how comes it to pass that those persons who have been vaccinated, or receiving the infection of Small-pox, invariably have Varioloid?

We will now proceed to state our own view of this highly interesting and important subject.

We hold that Vaccinella or Cow-pox is capable of affording by vaccination, full, and complete protection against Small-pox. And that all

that is necessary to secure entire immunity from Small-pox is, to repeat vaccination as long as it will continue to produce the Cow-pox vesicle. We assume the position that as long as vaccination will take in any individual case so as to produce the Cow-pox vesicle, so long that individual will be liable to take Small-pox, should he come in contact with it. And that when by repeating vaccination until it will no longer produce its characteristic vesicle; (any foreign matter introduced under the cuticle may produce a sore,) the individual thus vaccinated, is in our opinion as certainly protected for all coming time, against the contagion of Small-pox, or Varioloid, as if he had had either of those diseases. In connection with this fact, (as we believe it to be,) and in support of our position we remark that vaccination will

frequently take twice, and in some instances three, or even four times in the same subject, yet it will invariably be observed, that in each succeeding vaccination, the vesicle will be smaller, the constitutional disturbance less, and the pustule form, dry up, and the scab fall off at an earlier period than in the preceding vaccination. This can be accounted for only, from the fact, that each succeeding vaccination lessens the susceptibility of the system to vaccine, or variolous infection. It is probable that if we could obtain the vaccine virus pure and unadulterated from the cow, a single vaccination would in almost every instance be sufficient to afford full and complete protection against Small-pox. Yet as the virus in general use has passed through the systems of such multitudes of individuals, many of them doubtless

affected by psoric, scrofulous, or syphilitic miasma, is it not reasonable to suppose that the virus may have become deteriorated, and lost a part of its prophylactic power? We could adduce strong evidence in support of this opinion, and also of the danger of transmitting by vaccination psoric, scrofulous, and syphilitic miasma, but we are not disposed to enter into a lengthened discussion of this subject. We consider it advisable however, as a precautionary measure against the transmission of chronic miasma, to place the patient under an anti-psoric treatment at the time of vaccination. There is truth in the old adage, that "an ounce of preventive is worth a pound of cure."

Varioloid we hold to be nothing more nor less, than the bastard offspring of Small-pox, generated in a system partially protected from its virulence by vaccination; or in other words, it is

Small-pox modified by previous vaccination.

In conclusion, we would express the wish, that this subject, which we consider of vital importance to the safety and well-being of society, might receive the attention, and continue to be agitated by those in authority, until the truth in relation to it, should become so apparent, that the watchmen should see "eye to eye". And also that measures should be adopted, and if necessary, supported by penal enactments, securing to all not only vaccination, but re-vaccination, until Small-pox, - that terrible scourge of the human family, should exist in civilized society, only in the history of the past.

